

Purple-Nozzled Yogurt Slingers and Cracks of Heaven: Genital Humour on *UrbanDictionary.com*

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Resumen

El Internet ofrece la oportunidad de poder conectar y formar comunidades, como también, de poder compartir un sentido del humor que en otras esferas sociales no sería aceptable. El Internet también ofrece la oportunidad de poder infiltrarse en el género de un texto, como, por ejemplo: los diccionarios. Existen diccionarios de jerga serios, pero el UrbanDictionary.com está entre el humor y la subversión. Este artículo estudia cómo la convención de géneros de los diccionarios es utilizados y extendidos, siendo los estándares lexicográficos manipulados, como también, este artículo estudia cómo esta subversión podría resultar en un contenido humorístico. Además, la semántica de las entradas de textos, principalmente aquellos basadas en metáforas, es analizada en este artículo, con la finalidad de poder averiguar hasta qué punto ocurre de hacer humor sobre los órganos genitales en el UrbanDictionary.com, para que este website sea tan conocido. Por eso, la teoría de metáforas humorístico, será ampliada para así poder mirar cómo los procesos inesperados de transmisión resultan en humor incongruente y configurado.

Palabras clave: incongruencia, configuración, metáfora humorística, lexicografía, género.

Abstract

The internet offers possibilities to form communities and share a sense of humour that might not be acceptable in other spheres of public discourse. The internet also provides possibilities to develop and subvert text genres, such as dictionaries. There are serious slang dictionaries, but UrbanDictionary.com lies where humour and subversion meet. This article explores how the genre conventions of dictionaries are used and expanded to create a subversion of lexicographical standards and how these instances of subversion may result in humorous content. Also, the semantic properties of the entries, namely those based on metaphors, will be analysed with respect to how far these play a role in creating the specific genital humour UrbanDictionary.com is known for. For this, theories of metaphoric humour will be expanded to see how unexpected mapping processes result in incongruity and configurational humour.

Keywords: incongruity, configuration, humorous metaphor, lexicography, genre.

1. Introduction

The world wide web offers seemingly endless possibilities of finding communities that share interests, knowledge and also humour. Although laughing about delicate topics may not seem as 'easy' as it used to be, because the internet as a source of knowledge has also raised awareness regarding discrimination and insults of gender, sexism and other -isms, emerging genres on the internet do enable the formation of new communities that share specific kinds of humour no longer acceptable in public discourse. This humour targets

taboo concepts. Among others, taboo concepts include “bodies and their effluvia (sweat, snot, faeces, menstrual fluid, etc.); the organs and acts of sex, micturition and defecation” (Allan & Burridge 2006: 1) which are central to the genital humour analysed in this paper. There is hardly any other part of our lexical inventory that is so complex in its development and number of synonyms as this one. It yields many innovative, disgusting but also humorous new words.

It may be assumed that the social taboos surrounding the sensitivities described above and the need for finding a community to express maybe repressed humour will be reflected in some tendencies and mechanisms of genital humour, specifically those of incongruity and humorous metaphor. Since Aristotle, we have been aware of the fact that some linguistic devices and mechanisms are especially productive when it comes to humour. In this paper, I will focus on those items from my original research that show mainly metaphoric sense relations. On *UrbanDictionary.com* (UD) this humour manifests in an unusual genre – an open-source online slang dictionary which is created by lay people.

This paper deals with humour on two levels: Part 1 focusses on UD as a dictionary. It focusses on genre conventions and the humorous potential resulting from genre subversion, as well as the content usually expressed in the dictionary with regard to tabooed topics (see above). A collection of lexical items in original research showed the presence of many metaphoric lemmata. Part 2, therefore, focusses on the humorous metaphors present in the corpus and the unique characteristics of these with regard to degree of conventionality and conceptualisation (Lakoff & Johnson 1980), source domain configuration, mapping (cf. Lakoff 1987), and resolution of incongruity (cf. Dynel 2009). The presence and workings of these metaphors are closely connected to the workings of UD as a genre-subverting dictionary and this is why both genre in connection to metaphor, and vice versa, are central to this paper.

Due to the nature of the discussed content of this paper, the distinction between use and mention needs to be stressed in this introduction, as I am mentioning and not using any of these possibly hurtful terms. Nonetheless, I see this sensitivity as an important indication of having to deal with these words. This distinction, or rather the potential ambivalence of use and mention, can be productive for instances of humour in its own right – either in a self-deprecating sense or maybe in banter, entertainment or in-jokes etc. Although these sociolinguistic complexities are highly interesting, I want to focus on genre-immanent humour potential and semantic aspects here. This paper has evolved from original research conducted early in 2019 where over 1000 synonyms for primary and secondary sexual characteristics were collected from the UD-website, which were then semantically analysed.

It must be stressed here:

- This paper is heavily corpus-based. Some of the findings and conclusions might not be applicable to other corpora. Nonetheless, the results regarding unexpected mapping processes may further the development of a metaphoric theorisation of humour and humorous metaphors.
- This paper shows tendencies rather than absolute facts. It also shows how the combination of methodologies from humour studies and cognitive linguistics enables a deeper understanding of metaphoric humour.
- The examples are only a small extract from a large corpus and only constitute a small selection of the possible terms that would lend themselves to analysis.

They have been chosen, however, because they best illustrate the observed phenomena.

2. Part 1

2.1. Lexicography and Genre

This section of the paper deals with the properties and structural features of traditional dictionaries. This theoretical groundwork presents the basis for the perceivable deviation from genre conventions on UD. The following will then focus on how humorous potential lies in this subversion. In order to break down each element prone to subversion, each relevant characteristic of a traditional dictionary will be elaborated on and compared to its realisation on the slang-dictionary website. It is also important to establish the text-type ‘dictionary’ as showing features of a genre in order to understand genre subversion as a potential of incongruous humour.

The traditional dictionary can be seen as a standard reference book. “It is, thus, on explaining, describing and defining the meaning of words that the major function of dictionaries is considered to lie” (Jackson 2002: 86). It is governed by different economical, production and ideological factors: It has to be affordable and needs to fit the needs of a user. A pocket dictionary has a different function to a multi-volume dictionary in a linguist’s office. Further, the production parameters of book publishing play a role. Also, dictionaries have a traditional format, clearly recognisable at first glance. This ties in with the idea of *Textsorte* (Adamzik 2019) or *text type*. If we consider a genre as a group of texts with specific properties and/or text production as well as reception patterns then we can easily try to model dictionaries as a genre, too.

Dictionaries as such are seen as authoritative and are used to settle disputes on spelling or meaning of words: “[W]e all take what the dictionary says as authoritative: if the dictionary says so, it is so” (Jackson 2002: 21); they are perceived as “impersonal authority” (Hughes 2010: 87). However, dictionaries are compiled by lexicographers who – to a certain degree – follow their own agendas, make personal selections and choices based on personal preferences. Understanding dictionaries as historical products also means understanding them as cultural products. Jackson (2002) confirms that the “dictionary is part of the cultural fabric of our society” (ibid.: 21). Béjoint (2010) agrees, stating that dictionaries express a “*Weltanschauung*” (ibid.: 202; *world view/ideology - JR*) in the selection and definition of words. Older editions of dictionaries naturally express what can be perceived as outdated definitions on “religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender differentiation, racial and ethnic origin, disability, age” (ibid.: 203). According to Béjoint (2010), the cultural taboo on words of “sex and excretion” (ibid.: 209), and especially four-letter words (‘fuck’ and ‘cunt’) have been treated differently throughout history in different dictionaries (cf. ibid.: 209-211). Béjoint’s notion of selection (cf. ibid. 2010.: 202) not only concerns the selection of words, but also the selection of aspects entailed in the definition of their meaning (see also Dixon 2018: 25). “Clearly, in the end, it comes down to the lexicographer exercising their informed judgement in the face of the evidence that they have to work with” (Jackson 2002: 91), which means that lexicography is never objective (cf. Béjoint 2010: 216). According to Dixon (2018), “canonical examples” (ibid.: 26) taken from existing dictionaries are most apt to illustrate meaning. This is problematic, however, as the historically accurate meanings in a dictionary 100 years ago are often unlikely to be completely precise today.

The meanings of words vary over time; even between speech communities, meaning is not always unified (cf. Hughes 2010: 87). Definitions of words “correspond to what the lexicographers think that the public expects” (Béjoint 2010: 203). This leads to the idea of user orientation, in which the compilation of a dictionary reflects the cultural restraints of the lexicographers, and also the restraints and expectations the users pose (cf. Jackson 2002: 22). This has direct consequences for the cultural negotiation of taboo concepts or expressions and the inclusion of critical definitions. The relevance of these aspects of selection and user-orientation will become very clear when this paper turns to presenting key elements of text production on UD. Following the selection processes described above, dictionaries can never contain all words of a language, but only a selection of its vocabulary.

When it comes to text patterns, some properties are more relevant to the description of a dictionary than others: especially the layout and the structural features included, such as head-words (lemma) and the explications in form of short sentences.

Lemma: Lemmata, the ‘head-words’, are usually arranged in alphabetical order. The number of lemmata depends on said selection processes and economic factors, such as retail price, as well as available printing space and intended use (multi-volume office dictionary vs. pocket dictionary) and possible special dictionaries focussing on certain lexical fields or genres (medical dictionary vs. slang dictionary). Online dictionaries, however, are no longer reliant on space and can therefore transgress these boundaries. The amount of lemmata included is no longer necessarily restricted. Lemmata are usually printed in bold and show the correct spelling (a convention used in this paper, too). Often, the correct pronunciation is added in IPA transcription. Then, one or multiple senses follow, usually indicated by number or by letters. Here, the sense relations homonymy and polysemy determine whether a lemma has multiple entries or multiple senses: Homonyms are usually split into different entries because they usually constitute very different meanings and often belong to different word-classes, while polysemous senses are lumped together under one lemma. Traditionally, older senses precede newer senses, so that older definitions stand closer to the lemma than newer meanings. Traditional dictionaries, such as the OED or the Cambridge Dictionary have a strong focus on this chronological order.

Explication: The meaning of a lemma is then defined in an explication. The most common forms are endocentric phrases, where superordinate concepts are combined with distinctive features typical of the object defined. There are certain principles by which explications are constructed (see Jackson 2002, 93-94):

- “a word should be defined in terms simpler than itself [...],
- circularity of definition should be avoided, i.e. defining two or more lexemes in terms of each other [...],
- a definition should be substitutable for the item being defined [with regard to word class, and]
- different forms of definition are appropriate to different types of words”

These principles lend themselves to be used in a subversive manner, and the analysis will show that this is in fact the case on UD. Further, explications may make use of synonymy to differentiate meaning: Synonymy is used in definitions that “defin[e] style” (ibid.: 96), by indicating a higher or lower formality or different contexts of appropriate use. Especially vulgar words, taboo or slang expressions are often “‘defined’ by a synonym”

(Béjoint 2010: 211). These explications often carry said judgement by the lexicographers most explicitly via expression of disapproval (cf. *ibid.*: 212) or by omitting features in the explication (cf. *ibid.*: 213). In the corpus this paper is based on, these synonyms used in explications were used to compile the synonym lists.

Examples: Examples are meant to illustrate the context of use of words in larger syntagmatic structures; in syntactic constructions, sentences or phrases. Usually, the examples are fairly general and inoffensive. As will be seen, this is not the case for the corpus of this paper, as the nature of UD is to provoke, upset or even insult marginalised groups.

2.2. Urban Dictionary and Genre

Having established the genre conventions for dictionaries, this paper will now turn to determine the instances of incongruity that result from subverting these genre conventions. For this paper I understand incongruity as “[h]umour arising from disjointed, ill-suited pairings or ideas or situations or presentations of ideas or situations that are divergent from habitual customs” (Keith-Spiegel 1972: 7). Habitual customs are here understood in the sense of text production and reception patterns (see above). As will be shown, UD fulfils all these criteria.

UD was created by Aaron Peckham in 1999. This online dictionary is said to be the digital authority (Smith 2011: 44) concerning all things slang. Millions of words have been added to the database and millions of users have visited the platform (cf. Lapriore 2014: 245). This use of authoritative perception is the first clash with the traditional perception of authoritative dictionaries, as the tabooed content as well as ephemeral slang is usually omitted from traditional dictionaries.

This vast amount of slang entries arises due to the unique technical and contribution characteristics of online dictionaries in general. First, the structure of UD will be presented. This will form the basis for the subsequent analysis. Following the description, aspects important for the analysis will be gathered, first focussing on the structural subversions resulting in humour and then turning to humorous potential on the content level, i.e. metaphoric humour.



Figure 1: Screenshot from UrbanDictionary.com, homepage 26th April 2020

This screenshot shows the homepage of UD. It changes every day, as there is always a new ‘trending word’, here indicated by the yellow box “APR 26” above the lemma “nah bitch”. The main macrostructural elements are the usual ones for online dictionaries: There is a search bar, the individual entries are listed in chronological order and there are hyperlinks to other entries (see use of explications above).

Additionally, there are some features that comply with features that can be seen as part of the website’s ‘communication form’ (Brock & Schildhauer 2017). The website has multiple features of social media, such as hashtags, sharing functions (twitter, facebook etc.) and users can cast a popularity vote on an entry, here indicated by thumbs-up and thumbs-down buttons below an entry. A feature integral to UD’s open-source character is the function on the top right that enables users to register and ‘define a word’ themselves. All these features which enable lay people to contribute to the dictionary can be summarised under unique participation structures described by Cotter & Damaso (2007) and Abel & Meyer (2013).

In the following, I will exemplify how formal features of the traditional genre ‘dictionary’ are adapted and used on UD in the field of synonyms for primary sexual characteristics to create *potential* instances of humour. It is important to stress that we are dealing with potential instances, since especially humorous effect lies in the eye of the beholder – and in their ear. If we understand humour as resulting from semantic and pragmatic inference and if we consider incongruity and configurational humour (see below) to be two possible mechanisms, then the fulfilment of these conditions may allow us to recognise potentially humorous instances in the corpus underlying this paper.

Lemmata: Traditional dictionaries are first and foremost occupied with compiling vast amounts of lexemes from the vocabulary of a language. The slang inventory is often not gathered in them, or if it is, the lexical units first need to reach a certain degree of popularity, regularity in use and stability of meaning. Slang, in its essence, is ephemeral and in today’s world of social media and globalisation, the changes often happen unnoticed or within smallest communities. The lemmata on UD are all slang terms, which are essentially gathered without an editing or professional selection process. Stability in meaning or regularity of use are not determining factors regarding a lemma’s inclusion. The participation of lay people who simply sign up and write entries and the voting mechanisms determine how many senses are listed under an entry and where the sense lies within the number of entries.

Explication: UD breaks some of the principles described by Jackson above: The avoidance of a circularity of definition is oftentimes not fulfilled. Also, as seen in

Figure 2, many words have a great amount of entries and senses– so the traditional lexicographic techniques of lumping polysemous entries or splitting homonyms is not applied.



Figure 2: First and last entry for lemma 'penis', Screenshots taken from UrbanDictionary.com 27th April 2020

Here we see that there is a top definition and there are nearly 700 in total for the lemma **penis**. This is very unexpected, compared to a standard dictionary.

As **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.** shows, suitability of definition and appropriate form are fairly rare in the corpus. There seems to be no conventionalised structure to the entries' explications. There is a definite tendency to trump / surpass preceding entries, to be as offensive and vulgar as possible and to be shocking in the selection of examples. These tendencies often have the dynamic of one-upmanship.

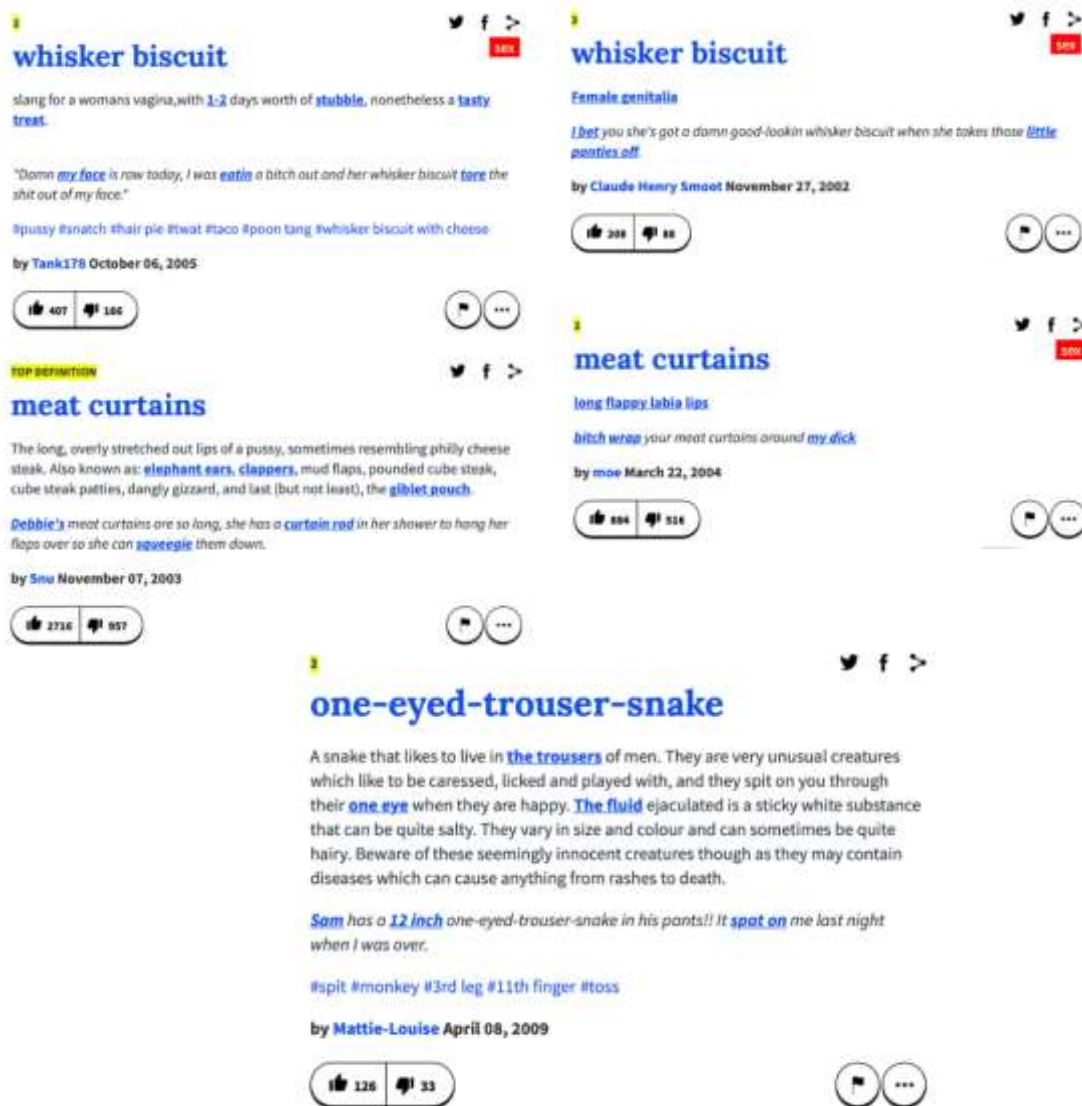


Figure 3: Genital synonyms from the original corpus to illustrate genre violations of habitual customs and potential incongruous humour; Screenshots taken 4th May 2020

Examples: As shown in

Figure 2 and **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.**, the examples, here in italics, perform the same function of showing the lemma in a syntactic construction. However, the main difference is the formality or relevance of its content. The first definition does not define the term **penis** at all but does relate to the explication; the second example does not refer to the explication above it but refers to the **penis**'s sexual function. The top definition is an instance of incongruity in its entirety. First of all, it is not the correct or oldest definition of a word, which is what we expect from a dictionary. Second, top definitions on UD are not based on correctness but on popularity. Here, the upvoting-mechanism decides which definitions are furthest up in the list of senses subsumed under one lemma. The second example especially can be seen as disjointed from the habitual practice of examples being formulated in a neutral and objective manner. The examples in **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden**

werden. all involve explicit sexual content and lack neutral or objective tone. All examples play on the potential incongruous humour arising from the break of conventions that are associated with dictionaries. Also, the direct reference to and activation of tabooed concepts can be regarded as a divergence from habitual customs.

Participation: As mentioned above, dictionaries have a long tradition and are seen as authoritative works. Traditionally, dictionaries are compiled by lexicographers, often with linguistic training. Therefore, their authoritative function in western societies is grounded on this perception of expert knowledge, earnestness and integrity. Authorities are often the target of subversive humour, so it is no surprise that these participation structures are subverted in a slang dictionary whose sole purpose is to share dirty definitions. Often, UD is simply referred to as an open-source or crowd-sourced dictionary (cf. Davis 2011; cf. Wortham 2014). Open-source is often not further defined. It simply alludes to the fact that there is some form of ‘openness’ to the creation or the contributions on the website. Abel & Meyer (2013) provide a detailed and historic overview on the subject of *user contribution* in internet-based lexicography – meaning the role users of online dictionaries play in writing, editing and revising entries to online dictionaries. According to their classification, UD is an open-collaborative dictionary, providing the possibility of explicit feedback and enabling exchange among dictionary users. This means that “additions, modifications, and deletions of dictionary articles or parts of them [are] performed by dictionary users” (ibid.: 183), which are “neither constituted nor controlled by a predefined group of experts [but are – J.R.] rather completely built by the users themselves [and are – J.R.] backed by the collective intelligence of a large number of authors” (ibid.). Anyone logged on to UD can contribute and there is no team of institutional editors to revise the entries, as would be the case in traditional lexicography.

Although users cannot change an existing entry, they can add numerous explications to an existing lemma – hereby adding new levels of denotation and connotation, or even commenting on existing entries. This can be seen as a UD-specific subversion of habitual customs.

Another genre-subverting element is UD’s voting mechanism. The Thumbs-Up/Thumbs-Down selection has direct consequences for an entry’s position among the other entries provided for a single lemma, as the number of votes places an entry on a scale within all other entries. It is implicit, as it also provides insight into the “usage of the dictionary” (Abel & Meyer 2013: 187) – namely information on an entry’s popularity. Cotter & Damaso (2007) focus on “the way UD compares to general-purpose dictionaries and privileges the user-author” (ibid.: 1) in comparison to edited and authoritative traditional dictionaries. User-authors are not scholars, so they may work with slightly different definitions of what constitutes slang (cf. ibid.: 4). Also, the corpus showed that the user-authors exploited the genre features of the dictionary and tried to exaggerate, disturb or trump others in their definitions. Also, some entries simply commented on preceding entries and did not provide new senses.

Part 1 shows that instances of potential humour arise from incongruity, i.e. the divergence from habitual customs on the level of genre conventions. The following Part 2 can be seen as a deeper engagement with the workings of humour on a content rather than a structural level. The structural considerations so far provide the framework in which the UD-specific genital metaphoric humour exists.

3. Part 2

3.1. *Unexpected Mapping* – Humorous Metaphors

In the last section it was pointed out that user-authors often try to create humorous entries. In the context of denoting genitals, this is done by using potentially humorous metaphors specific to the framework provided by the website. This section of the paper will focus on relevant research on conceptual metaphor, image metaphor, as well as one-shot mapping and incongruity in metaphoric humour. These considerations tie in with the here presented differentiation between expected and unexpected mapping processes.

Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) *Conceptual Metaphor Theory* is one of the bases for the interpretation of the metaphorical synonyms in the corpus of this paper. In Conceptual Metaphor Theory, metaphor is a system of thought that allows us to experience something (abstract) in terms of something else, often more concrete, based on perceived similarity. The focus of this paper lies on the potential that metaphors have in conceptualising the world we live in. This potential is used to highlight the tabooed subjects discussed (i.e. genitals). Metaphors can make the unspeakable speakable. This element of conceptualisation is shown in this paper in the modelling of possible configuration of source domains conceptualising genitals.

Further, the concept of image metaphor (Evans & Green 2006; Sullivan 2019) needs to be considered. Image metaphors are metaphors where “there are images in both the source and target domains and where the source domain image is mapped onto the target domain image” (Lakoff 1987: 222). These metaphors are based on actual physical resemblance (how things look/feel/smell); source domains and target domains are similarly concrete. The mapping processes are governed by experience and not abstraction. Image metaphors are therefore especially apt at highlighting specific aspects of target concepts vividly and evoking images.

Abstract concepts govern our cultural understandings of taboo: each culture has its own set of taboos, and more or less arbitrary but historically developed and culturally agreed concepts, such as those listed above, are affected by this. Metaphors are essentially an optimal highlighting mechanism in the context of tabooed sexual content, i.e. genitalia. Usually, we would expect metaphors to highlight preferred and hide dispreferred, i.e. tabooed aspects, of targeted concepts. For incongruous humour, metaphors of course offer the possibility to highlight otherwise tabooed aspects of these concepts, if these taboos are meant to be subverted and the taboo humour attached to these aspects is meant to be expressed (Dynel 2009: 35). In the case of UD, this often targets the highlighting of looks, smells and feelings usually dispreferred in the conceptualisation of genitals in social discourse (e.g. dysfunctionality or emittance of bad odour). Here we see that image metaphors are potentially productive for humorous metaphors.

The preceding considerations of image metaphors show differences to Lakoff's (1987) *one-shot mapping*. The following table illustrates where Lakoff's considerations differ from those proposed in this paper. Lakoff speaks of a general model which has been adapted here due to the corpus-based work of this paper:

Lakoff's distinction (1987: 221)	Relevance for this paper
1. "One-shot-mappings [...] are not used over and over again; that is, they are not conventionalised"	This is not true for this paper. As shown in the configuration of possible source domains below, there is a degree of conventional use in this corpus.
2. "They are not used in everyday reasoning"	Although this is true for the corpus, the metaphors are used within the realms of the platform with a degree of regularity.
3. "There is no system of words and idiomatic expression in the language whose meaning is based on them"	This is not the case for this corpus. There is proof that there is a system of words, i.e. humorous metaphors, for genitalia.
4. "They map image structure instead of propositional structure"	Yes, this corresponds with Evans & Green 2006; Sullivan 2019
5. "They are not used to understand the abstract in terms of the concrete"	see 4.
6. "They do not have a basis in experience and commonplace knowledge that determines what gets mapped onto what"	This is not the case for the corpus of this paper. As the configuration of source domains and detection of resemblance-based mapping coincide, there is a degree of commonplace knowledge unique and specific to the website.

Table 1: Lakoff's (1987) distinction of one-shot mapping and their relevance for this paper

In order to elaborate on the workings of the metaphors in the corpus, it is necessary to consider metaphor as a source of incongruous humour more generally. Dynel (2009) offers a convincing argument for potential humorous metaphors resulting from incongruity. The main arguments this paper draws upon are diaphoric metaphors and the resolution of incongruity. To Dynel (2009), what makes incongruity humorous is the "unexpectedness, illogicality and ultimate resolution" (ibid.: 28). The features of unexpectedness and illogicality have here been described by the process of unexpected mapping: the selection of metaphorically mapped aspects is based on a prior conceptualisation and configuration of possible source domains and then these patterns are broken through the selection of less-salient features which are then mapped. Through the selection of less-salient aspects entirely new images are created (see examples below). "The fact that profiled aspects of a structure will appear more salient than others [highlighting] allows linguistically-creative people to achieve humorous misdirection, causing observers to focus on the profile (or figure) while the essence of the joke goes unmarked in the base structure (or ground)" (Veale et al. 2006: 308). Therefore, at a first glance, the metaphors of the corpus may be seen as diaphoric metaphors, focusing on "dissimilarities" (Dynel 2009: 32) between tenor and vehicle.

Along with the fact that the metaphors are likely to be humorous due to their taboo and inappropriate concepts:

full appreciation of the metaphor and its humorousness comes with the hearer's realisation that the incongruous concepts deriving from the incongruous domains are in a way congruous. In other words, the incongruity between the tenor and the vehicle must be resolved so that the full humorous potential and the metaphorical meaning can be acknowledged (ibid.: 34)

However, humorous potential is not only the result of incongruity in the selection of highlighted aspects. Especially Dynel's last thought leads to regarding configuration: Keith-Spiegel (1972) describes the phenomenon of configurational humour as "elements originally perceived as unrelated suddenly fall[ing] into place" (ibid. 11). The difference to incongruity lies in this unexpected fit rather than the "disjointedness" (11) of incongruity. According to Keith-Spiegel, in cases of configurational humour "the appreciation of a joke must be instantaneous" and "must be understood clearly and completely" (12). So, although the resulting image seems unexpected, as attention is drawn to taboo aspects, it is quite fitting and can be understood clearly and completely. Quoting Maier (1932), Keith-Spiegel concludes that the "unexpected configuration is a surprise". Unexpectedness plays a major role in the corpus of this paper. As will be seen in the configuration of source domains explained in the following section, it will be established that within this corpus some mapping processes are expected. There are however mapping processes within the same configuration of source domains which are unexpected. The cognitive work performed to achieve resolution of incongruity is reduced due to the genre-features of UD described above, in that the readers are prepared for humorous problem-solving.

Separated into male and female genitalia, and leaving out synonyms for secondary sexual characteristics, the following shows those synonyms from the corpus of over 1000 items which are based on conceptual and image metaphors. As will be shown below, we are dealing with conceptual metaphors to a certain degree, as specific source domains are used throughout the corpus, showing that, in fact, genitalia are conceptualised via these metaphoric mapping processes. The category of image metaphor has been selected as the aspects mapped are based on physical resemblance and offer an understanding of those aspects seen as most salient for mapping.

Vagina (vulva):¹ The following table shows an extract of the 469 lexical items collected from UD for the search term 'vagina'. 50 of the terms we identified as image metaphors, 230 items were identified as conceptual metaphors.

Image Metaphors	Total: 50	Extract of Examples
– visual	<u>General</u> : 6	split peach, canoe, gash
	<u>Based on animals</u> : 15	fish lips, bird's nest
	<u>Based on furniture</u> : 4	love rug, meat curtains
– auditory	1	mumbler
– gustatory	1	candy kiss

– haptic	16	silk funnel, slimy hatchet wound
– olfactory	7	stench trench
<hr/>		
Conceptual Metaphors	Total: 230	
– Food	70	taco, whisker biscuit
– Animals	18	beaver, pussy, wooki
– Clothes	33	meat wallet, penis purse
– Flowers	6	flower, rosebud
– Containers/ Boxes	28	monster box, cum dumpster
– Tunnels/Caves/ Holes	25	fuck hole, love canal, pole hole, tampon tunnel
– Architecture	24	silk igloo, golden palace
– Landscapes	24	happy valley, the grandest canyon

Table 2: Metaphors for vulva/vagina from UrbanDictionary.com

The following analysis will focus on a limited number of examples from the metaphor categories, in order to illustrate the process of expected and unexpected mapping, which can potentially be humorous.

Table 2 shows that the synonyms collected can be analysed under different aspects because often different sense relations are combined. Interpretation here has to be understood as a selective analysis, rather than an absolute conclusion.

Figure 3 shows the configuration of possible source domains for ‘vagina’-conceptual metaphor synonyms taken from UD:

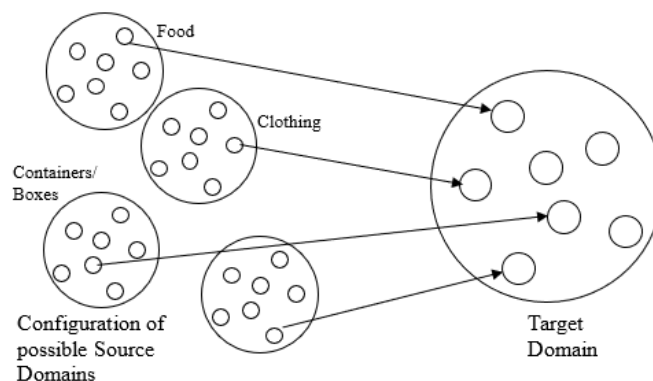
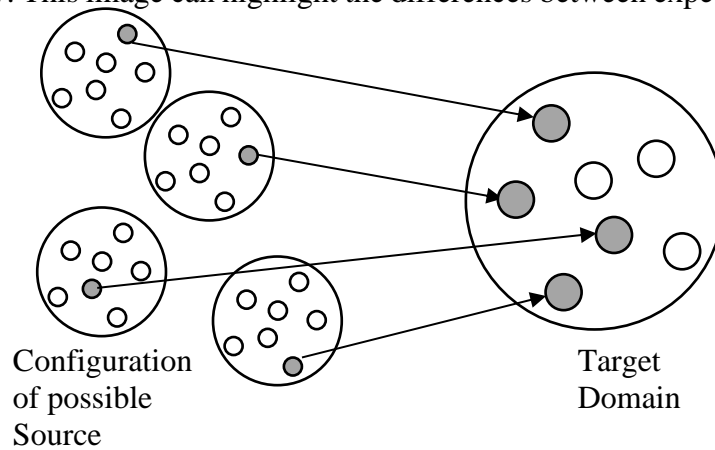


Figure 3: Configuration of possible source domains conceptualising “vagina”

The large circle on the right represents the target domain, of which certain aspects are highlighted via the source domains. The mapping processes of concrete aspects from source to target domain are indicated by the arrows. All possible source domains make up the configuration of possible source domains, represented by the smaller circles on the left. The smallest circles indicate the aspects which are mapped, such as taste, smell,

shape or visual similarity. This image can highlight the differences between expected and



unexpected mapping in

Figure 4 and **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.**

We can assume these source domains as those that are most salient and can be seen as expected sources of mapping processes. Within these source domains some aspects are more likely to be highlighted than others. Figure 4 shows that the activation of source domains depends on the aspects of the target domain a metaphor aims to highlight. Some source domains may not be activated without first regarding the target domain, or vice versa (cf. Dynel (2009): 36, *aptness*). For instance, if the aspect of ‘taste’ is meant to be highlighted, the source domain FOOD is more likely to be activated than the source

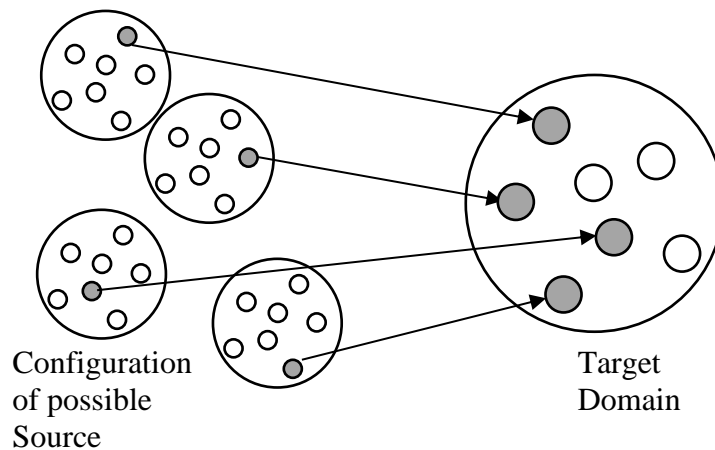


Figure 4: Expected Mapping Processes

domain CLOTHING; the source domain CONTAINERS/BOXES is more likely to highlight ‘shape’ aspects in the target domain, rather than ‘taste’. These aspects that are most likely selected within the configuration of source domains are here indicated by the shaded smallest circles:

Some exemplary analysis: The ontological metaphor BODIES ARE CONTAINERS, is here narrowed down: VAGINAS ARE CONTAINERS FOR EJACULATE (**cum dumpster**), VAGINAS ARE CONTAINERS FOR SEXUAL PLEASURE (**love bucket**) and VAGINAS ARE CONTAINERS FOR PENISES (**banana box**). The aspects mapped from the source domain are ‘shape’ and ‘function’: because the vagina is a bounded

entity, it can be seen as a container; because it is the female reproductive organ, it can be seen as fulfilling sexual functions, i.e. a function serving penises. In this sense, female genitalia are reduced to their sexual function, the meaning focusing on women as sexual objects. Similar statements can be made about the 25 TUNNELS/CAVES/HOLES metaphors. The items do not seem to be based on the ontological metaphor VAGINAS ARE CONTAINERS FOR EJACULATE, because the bounded spaces used to map aspects on the target domain are only longitudinally bounded and thus cannot hold liquids like the CONTAINERS above, but rather direct liquids toward the uterus, such as **goop chute**. The longitudinal bounding with endless depth mostly contains the ontological metaphor VAGINAS ARE CONTAINERS FOR SEXUAL PLEASURE, such as **love canal** and **tunnel of love** or **hump hole, fuckhole, pole hole** and **penis pothole**. The first two items seem to be slightly more appreciative in their expressive connotation because they refer to vagina as a space of love. These items could then be seen as mildly more euphemistic, while still reducing the vagina to its sexual function. The second cluster of items are more dysphemistic, as the organ is seen as an inanimate object entirely reduced to its passive involvement in sexual intercourse, again ‘filled’ by a penis.

The source domain providing most possibilities for metaphors is FOOD. The aspects mapped are either based on perceived visual (**vertical bacon sandwich, fur burger**), olfactory (**clamshell, fish dish**) or gustatory (**sugar cookie, candy cunt**) similarities. Again, the items grouped in this category in the corpus could have been interpreted as image metaphors, but the number of metaphors based on different aspects of FOOD, CONTAINERS etc., and the systematic mapping of multiple aspects indicate that vaginas are in fact conceptualised in terms of FOOD, CONTAINERS etc. rather than just resembling these concepts visually. The lexical creativity in this field is mostly jocular and hyperbolic, exaggerating for instance olfactory similarity.

Penis: The original corpus contained 527 penis synonyms. The compilation and categorisation are adapted from

Table 2, making a direct comparison between the lexical items of Table 2 and

Table 3 possible, in order to see the conceptual differences between vulva/vagina and penis.

Image Metaphors	Total: 89	
– visual	Shapes: 18	hydrant, sprite can, tusk
	Colour: 5	blue vein cigar, red crayon one eyed trouser snake
	One-eyed x: 12	
	Size: 18	needle dick, love length, porsche meat two veg
	Testicles + penis: 10	
– auditory	6	Meat whistle, dingdong
– gustatory	/	
– haptic	19	boner, limp bizkit
– olfactory	1	Badwang
Conceptual Metaphors	Total: 185	
– Food	32	sausage, semen lollipop

– Animals	34	snake, ardvark, sperm worm
– Faucets/Pumps	10	piss pump, gravy spigot
– Weapon	45	cum gun, meat pistol, blood sword
– Wood and Metal Poles and Sticks	57	fuck stick, rape stick, pole, pipe
– Warrior	5	purple helmeted love warrior
– Clothes	2	turtle neck, vaders helmet

Table 3: Metaphors for penis from UrbanDictionary.com

The configuration of possible source domains proves that there are definite differences in how we conceptualise penises and vulvas/vaginas. 185 penis synonyms based on conceptual metaphors were compiled from UD.com. The central finding from the corpus was that **penis** and penis-synonyms are often defined in terms of strength, power and significance. It comes as no surprise that WEAPON (45 items) and WOODEN/METAL STICKS/POLES (57 items) are the most productive source domains. The WARRIOR is motivated by similar aspects of power, although there are only few examples in the corpus, here with only five items.

The following example of weapon metaphors are determinative compounds; the second constituents are hyponyms of the hypernym ‘weapon’: a gun or a sword are kinds of weapons. Aspects of ‘strength’, ‘power’ and ‘harmfulness’ are mapped from WEAPONS onto PENIS. The first constituents vary significantly. **Cum gun** is determined by a slang-synonym for ejaculate. **Meat pistol** focusses on the aspect of materiality: the penis is made of flesh, i.e. meat. **Blood** in **blood sword** contains a cause-for-effect metonymy, indicating that the use of a sword causes the shedding of blood (depending on the perspective of interpretation, this cause-for-effect metonymy could also be motivated by the fact that erection is an effect caused by increased blood flow to the organ). Generally speaking, these metaphors present the male sexual organ as weapons used against the female counterpart. The exaggerative stylisation PENISES ARE WEAPONS not only carries derogatory, taboo and dysphemistic connotations; they are simply misogynistic. In comparison to the aspects of ‘harmfulness’ and ‘power’ which the WEAPON metaphors are based on, the PENISES ARE WOODEN/METAL STICKS/POLES conceptualisation highlights and maps aspects of ‘hardness’, ‘materiality’ and ‘shape’ onto the target, as in **pole**, **pipe** and all compound with **stick** as a second constituent. These stick metaphors seem more jocular, especially when these constituents are combined as in **joystick** or **good wood buttermilk stick**, highlighting the joy of sexual intercourse or a humorously exaggerated image of ejaculation. There is a focus on the erectile state of the penis as the motivation for mapping.

However, some of the PENISES ARE WOODEN/METAL STICKS/POLES conceptual metaphors bear similar expressive connotations as the PENISES ARE WEAPONS category, which are blatantly misogynistic. Such items as **rape stick**, **rod of correction** or **meatbeat** carry violent connotations, which are utterly appalling. These aspects justify the criticism of open-source user-created dictionaries, such as UD. As Nguyen et al. (2018) point out, the dynamics of trumping preceding entries or outdoing each other in

finding vulgar or offensive, or even violently connoted synonyms are prone to create an atmosphere in which this offensiveness is tolerated. Even if these synonyms are restricted to UD and are probably not in actual use, their existence itself indicates that there are underlying systematic problems of inequality and discrimination in society that surface here.

Unexpected mapping:

There are examples from the corpus that do not fit the described tendencies. **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.** shows how these entries select unexpected aspects from the same configuration of source domains and use these unexpected aspects to highlight usually dispreferred aspects of primary sexual characteristics. This often results in image metaphors which are closely connected to the conceptual metaphors, as they use the same configuration of source domains. Also, within the corpus, the expectations regarding the tendencies described above (vagina in relation to penis/misogynist tendencies vs. penis as powerful, harmful, focus on erection) are broken. We could say, that the mapping processes in themselves are incongruous. This incongruity resulting from unexpected mapping is based on the tension Dynel (2009) observes between “the topic and the vehicle and their attributes” (ibid. 31). There is conceptual distance between the aspects expected to be mapped, and those actually mapped. To a certain degree this unexpectedness conforms with Lakoff’s (1987) distinctions for one-shot mappings.

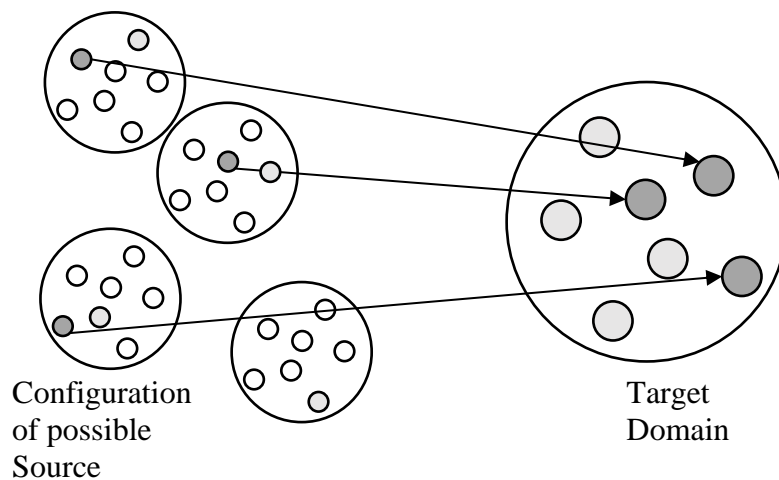


Figure 5 Unexpected Mapping

For example, the conceptualisation of PENIS IS WEAPON showed that aspects of destruction and harm are expected to be highlighted. In such words as **purple nozzled yogurt slinger** or **snot rifle** aspects of colour, food and bodily effluvia are highlighted. In **worm** or **armadillo**, the lack of hair or excess of skin are mapped. For vagina the term **whisker biscuit**, **taco**, **fish lips** and **pussy** activate similar usually unexpected aspects of the source domains, such as pubic hair and fleshiness. The resulting exaggerated imagery is unexpected and incongruous, yet finally, the elements fall into place, creating a fitting image. The incongruity is resolved.

4. Conclusion

Following from these analyses, the following conclusions for genre subversion and metaphoric humour on UD can be drawn on the basis of incongruity and configuration humour. This is the result of unique workings and relations between structural characteristics and metaphoric content on the website.

Regarding genre, this paper could show that the examples from the corpus proves that incongruous humour arises from the diversion of habitual customs, i.e. text production patterns. The subversions are instances of incongruity regarding one-upmanship, the wrong use of example sentences and/or vulgar/wrong content in general. Additionally, the lemmata on UD.com are mainly slang terms – slang, as a subversive part of our lexicon is prone to the manipulation and expression of otherwise taboo aspect of language – such as sexual content or excretion from the body. Therefore, we find a plethora of synonyms for primary sexual organs in this dictionary – the creative compositions of which are manifold. We would expect some lexical items that are not present in standard dictionaries because slang is ephemeral by nature. This is the reason we find terms such as **purple-nozzled yogurt slingers**, **panty hamster** and **vertical bacon sandwich**. The habitual custom of explications is partially subverted or faulted in order to exaggerate or boast how little the user-authors care about conventions. The website provides a stable frame for humorous metaphor.

Regarding metaphoric humour specific to the corpus of this paper, a degree of conceptual metaphors and conventionality of the configuration of possible source domains were detected. The main potential for metaphoric humour lies in the majority of metaphors being based on seemingly diaphoric image metaphors, and the tension between vehicle and tenor based on incongruities. Through the stable framing within the platform, the incongruities are resolved. Working of configurational humour could be detected here, too.

Lastly, I would like to make a global observation regarding the social dynamics of the platform. As mentioned, the underlying socio-political patriarchal gender bias is detectable. There are dynamics benefiting the production of genital humour with a misogynist taint. The internet seems to be the space where people can escape to in order to find an outlet for their otherwise negatively received politically incorrect humour. As Nguyen et al. (2018) say “[o]nline platforms with user generated content are often susceptible to offensive content, which may be insulting, profane and/or harmful towards individuals as well as social groups ... the existence of such content in platforms could signal to other users that such content is acceptable and impact the norm of the platform”. In the context of superiority this means that acceptance and also appreciation of specific humour can be the result. And in connection to our consideration of genre, social allegiance, background, appreciation and acceptability result in a mutual understanding of production and reception patterns within the online dictionary.

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Notes

ⁱ In gender and feminist discourse, it is necessary to point out that the term ‘vagina’ is often used incorrectly, as it refers only to a part of the inner lying organs of the female sexual reproduction anatomy. The outer visual parts of female genitalia are actually called ‘vulva’ but because the search results for ‘vulva’ were insufficient, the more common term ‘vagina’ was used.